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TUESDAY
JULY 27, 1954

Nancy, E. and I started at 9:30 by car and went to see her new purchase, Little Haisley. It is in terrible shape, but after treatment by her taste and imagination will, I assume, become one of the beautiful houses of England. Part of it is Georgian, another portion Gothic. There is a fine topiary garden, two fascinating ost houses, and a fourteenth century tithe barn. She paid four thousand pounds for it, which will be only a fraction of the expense of rendering it habitable.

We had a picnic lunch in the house. Outside it rained and blew gustily. What an astounding climate -- I should have worn winter clothes.

Our next stop was near Swindon at Lydiard Tregos. Marvelous place. Home of the St. Johns' (Bolinbroke). Now is being cured of dry rot by the County Council. One of the St. John tombs -- all in marble -- in the adjoining church is the best funeral monument I've ever seen. The Count full length with a wife on either side, two litters of boys and girls at head and feet, and deceased infants sculptured on the frieze. All sorts of other fascinating sculptures, paintings, frescoes in the church.

We went to Ashdown, a Craven place, presently uninhabited, Dutch architecture, built by a Craven for his elderly girl friend, an ex-Queen imported from Holland. It is odd and pleasing. Many rabbits gambolling in the park, a solitary one moping from myxamotosis in the courtyard. Soon they will all be dead.

We had tea with Mrs. Lloyd Thomas at Compton Beauchamp, recently sold to David Astor. Nancy tried to buy it from him, but he would not play. A perfect place -- a moat, a patio, one facade like the Petit Trianon, unrivalled gate (with beasts on pillars) and ironwork, dependencies like those in French courtyards,

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gardens and lawns incomparable, not magnificent, not modest, just elegant.

We stopped to view the exterior of Ramsbury, which is being done over by Lord Wilton, who has sold Ditchley. Nancy was warmly greeted by one of her Ditchley spaniels. The brick house and stables are [redacted] beautiful, as is the orangery facing the famous trout river -- the Kennet -- a building one longs to copy.

It grew late and we raced in drizzle over the downs to Beckhampton or thereabouts, where we dined and spent the night in Jeremy Tree's rented house. He was at Goodwood, and we were snug in this portion of his training establishment; alongside of us were stabled the thirty thoroughbreds whose destinies he guides, their gallops within view of the bedroom windows.

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